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Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People

Summary record of the 382nd meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Wednesday, 17 May 2017, at 3 p.m.

Chair: Mr. Seck ..... (Senegal)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.15 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

1. *The agenda was adopted.*

Update on developments since the previous meeting of the Committee

2. **The Chair** said that since the previous meeting of the Committee, on 22 February 2017, a briefing session for the members and observers of the Committee had been organized by the Division for Palestinian Rights.

3. On 17 March 2017, on the margins of the sixty-first session of the Commission on the Status of Women, the Committee had invited Dr. Hanan Ashrawi, renowned Palestinian legislator and politician, for an exchange of views on the latest developments in Palestine.

4. On 22 March 2017, the Bureau had held a meeting with the Secretary-General at which it had stressed the importance that his report on the implementation of Security Council resolution 2334 (2016) should be substantive and in writing. The Secretary-General had reiterated his full support for the Committee and offered additional assistance, if required, for the capacity-building programme for staff of the Government of the State of Palestine. He had also categorically stated his strong preference for a two-State solution, and reaffirmed the illegality of Israeli settlements under international law.

5. On 24 March 2017, the Security Council had held its monthly briefing on the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question, during which the Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process and Personal Representative of the Secretary-General to the Palestine Liberation Organization and the Palestinian Authority had reported on the implementation of Security Council resolution 2334 (2016).

6. On 10 April 2017, the Bureau had held a meeting to finalize the draft programme of the United Nations forum to mark fifty years of occupation, to be held on 29 and 30 June 2017 at United Nations Headquarters, and had approved that programme under the no-objection procedure.

7. On April 18, the film "Ghost Hunting" had been screened as a joint activity with the Permanent Observer Mission of the State of Palestine to mark Palestinian Prisoners' Day.

8. On 20 April 2017, the Security Council had held an open debate on the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question, at which Mr. Neville Gertze, Vice-Chair of the Committee and Permanent Representative of Namibia to the United Nations, had delivered a statement on behalf of the Committee.

The situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and developments in the political process

9. **Ms. Abdelhady-Nasser** (Observer for the State of Palestine) said that on the sixty-ninth anniversary of the Nakba, despite decades of United Nations resolutions, the Palestinian people's quest to exercise their rights continued to be obstructed by Israeli intransigence, with tragic consequences for the Palestinian nation, the Middle East region and the entire world. Even as the Committee was holding its current meeting, over 1,500 Palestinian prisoners were in their thirtieth day of a hunger strike protesting the occupying Power's violation of their human rights and dignity. That non-violent protest had been met with callous disregard by Israel, which, instead of responding to demands to end solitary confinement and other practices prohibited by international law, had resorted to cynical attempts to discredit the integrity of the hunger strikers. She called on the Committee to issue a statement expressing solidarity with the hunger strikers and the other 6,500 men, women and children being held in Israeli prisons, and calling on Israel, the occupying Power, to respect its obligations towards those prisoners under international humanitarian law and international human rights law.

10. In the meantime, all the other ills of the 50-year foreign occupation were ongoing. Some two million Palestinians remained under siege following the 10-year blockade of Gaza by Israel, with severe socioeconomic, humanitarian and psychosocial consequences that were causing Palestinian youth to lose any hope for the future. She called on Israel to end the blockade, and for the members of the Committee to offer whatever support they could to alleviate the dire situation in Gaza. Israel was also going ahead with its illegal settlement activities in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, in flagrant violation of international law and United Nations resolutions, including Security Council resolution 2334 (2016), which unequivocally demanded the cessation of all such activities. Israeli plans to build thousands of new settlement units would only compound the damage to the contiguity and unity of Palestine, thereby further undermining the viability of a two-State solution. She stressed that Israel would not be able to act with such impunity if the Security Council would only enforce its resolutions. She urged

the Committee to support efforts to press for substantive written reports by the Secretary-General pursuant to resolution 2334 (2016).

11. The Secretary-General's most recent report on the operations of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) (A/71/849) had highlighted the severe funding shortfalls affecting the Agency's operations. Her delegation had circulated to the Committee a draft resolution, prepared in coordination with the host countries, UNRWA and the Steering Committee for the Resource Mobilization Strategy, that followed up on the Secretary-General's recommendations for exploring ways to ensure adequate and predictable funding for UNRWA. That draft resolution proposed a combination of measures that included voluntary contributions, expanding the donor base and public-private partnerships that might include such financial institutions as the World Bank and the Islamic Development Bank. She wished to clarify that the resolution was not calling for any increase in the overall regular budget; it was merely proposing a larger allocation from that budget to enable UNRWA to carry out its mandate.

Reports from the Rapporteur on (i) the United Nations Round Table on the Question of Palestine, held in Managua on 4 February 2017, and on the Committee visit to Mexico on 7 February 2017; and (ii) the United Nations Capacity-building Workshop on Sustainable Development Goals for Staff of the State of Palestine, held in Beirut on 27 and 28 April 2017

12. **Mr. Inguanez** (Malta), Rapporteur, said that on 4 February 2017, a United Nations round table on the question of Palestine had been held in Managua on the theme "Building bridges with the Palestinian Diaspora in Central America". It had been attended by diaspora Palestinians from the region and representatives of Palestine, 10 States and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation. Speakers had included a former Prime Minister of Belize (who was of Palestinian origin) and the mayors of Bethlehem and Beit Jala. The round table final declaration had been circulated by the Secretariat. Concrete proposals had been put forward for a Palestine occupation remembrance day, a truth and reconciliation commission to look into the Nakba and a Palestinian diaspora chamber of commerce to facilitate investment in Palestine. The Committee's delegation had met with a number of high-level Nicaraguan officials. The round table had highlighted the need to raise awareness in Latin America of the work of the Committee.

13. On 7 February 2017, a Committee delegation had conducted a visit to Mexico to promote Palestinian statehood, caution against the possible relocation of the United States Embassy in Israel to Jerusalem, and seek support for the implementation of Security Council resolution 2334 (2016). That delegation had included the Permanent Representative of Nicaragua and the Permanent Observer of the State of Palestine, and had met with a number of high-level officials of the Government of Mexico, which was one of three Latin American countries that had not yet recognized the State of Palestine. Those meetings and a conference presented by the delegation on the two-State solution had helped to raise awareness of the question of Palestine both at the government level and among the Mexican public.

14. On 27 and 28 April 2017, the Committee, in conjunction with the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, had organized the second Capacity-building Workshop on Sustainable Development Goals for Staff of the State of Palestine, on the theme "Partnerships for empowering a future State of Palestine: Sustainable Development Goal 17 and South-South and triangular cooperation". It had been attended by representatives of various ministries and entities of the State of Palestine, as well as the Palestinian business community and civil society. Participants had emphasized that South-South and triangular cooperation could only succeed if the ultimate objective was to end the occupation. He urged the Committee to follow up with more capacity-building activities and to share its experiences and expertise with the State of Palestine.

15. **Mr. Hermida Castillo** (Nicaragua) said that his country was proud to have hosted the round table in Managua, which had been the first time that representatives of the entire Palestinian diaspora in Central America had come together, and had provided an opportunity to highlight the historical bonds that united the Palestinian and Nicaraguan peoples.

16. **Ms. Ziade** (Observer for Lebanon) said that her country was honoured to have hosted the Capacity-building Workshop on Sustainable Development Goals for Staff of the State of Palestine in collaboration with UNRWA and appreciated the interest from the diplomatic community in Beirut. Her country would be happy to host similar workshops in the future.

17. **Ms. Krisnamurthi** (Indonesia) said that her delegation wished to reconfirm its strong support of the two-State solution, as any other proposals were not only harmful but could prove detrimental to a just and lasting settlement. Her delegation also welcomed the

Committee's initiatives to enhance the capacity of the Palestinian people to achieve independence, especially the Managua round table and the capacity-building workshop held in Lebanon.

United Nations forum to mark 50 years of occupation, to be held on 29 and 30 June 2017, at United Nations Headquarters

18. **The Chair** drew the Committee's attention to working paper No. 1, distributed by the Secretariat, which contained the provisional programmes for the forum.

19. On 29 June 2017, the forum would highlight the need to end the Israeli occupation of Palestine, including East Jerusalem, which would then be into its 50th year. It would also provide a platform for discussion of concrete steps for ending the occupation, the exercise by the Palestinian people of their right to self-determination and the independence of the State of Palestine. On 30 June, the forum would focus on mobilizing international support for the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people through cooperation with civil society organizations, which would be provide with the opportunity to contribute to policies aimed at a just resolution of the Palestinian question, based on international law and the relevant United Nations resolutions.

20. He took it that the Committee wished to approve the provisional programme for the forum.

21. *It was so decided.*

International Conference on the Question of Jerusalem, to be held on 20 and 21 July 2017 in Baku

22. **The Chair** drew the attention of the Committee to working paper No. 2, distributed by the Secretariat, which contained the provisional programme for the event.

23. The International Conference on the Question of Jerusalem, to be organized jointly with the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, would provide information about the realities of life for the Palestinian people under Israeli occupation in East Jerusalem. It would also explore the question of the city in the context of the two-State solution and the international environment. The Conference would present proposals on how the international community, particularly members of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, could provide concrete support to Palestinians in Jerusalem, with a focus on the economy and development, particularly in the tourism sector.

24. He took it that the Committee wished to approve the provisional programme for the Conference.

25. *It was so decided.*

Position of the Committee on the quarterly reports of the Secretary-General on the implementation of Security Council resolution 2334 (2016)

26. The Chair said that during its meeting on 15 May 2017, the Bureau had decided to reiterate its position regarding the quarterly reports of the Secretary-General on the implementation of Security Council resolution 2334 (2016). A copy of that position had been distributed by the Secretariat and the position would be conveyed to the Secretary-General.

Other matters

27. **Mr. Islam** (Observer for Bangladesh) said that his country wished to reiterate its unrelenting support for Palestine and the two-State solution. It joined the other delegations in highlighting the importance of capacity-building for the Palestinian people in their pursuit of the Sustainable Development Goals.

28. **The Chair** said that the previous day's meeting on sustainable funding of UNRWA had been very important and very revealing. Given that the UNRWA budget situation was dire, he reiterated his appeal for more voluntary contributions and increased regular budget allocations to UNRWA, which could make a difference.

29. **Ms. Abdelhady-Nasser** (Observer for the State of Palestine), said her delegation fully agreed and with the Chair's appeal to Committee members. While their support was important, it needed to be translated into concrete action to help Palestinian refugees. The funding deficit at UNRWA was indeed severe, and over five million Palestinian refugees in the Middle East were dependent on the humanitarian assistance and modicum of stability that the Agency provided.

30. Her delegation also felt strongly about the capacity-building programmes developed by the Committee and the Division for Palestinian Rights in recent years. Such programmes, which allowed staff of the Palestinian Government to receive training within the United Nations system, should be continued and expanded. The Committee should also engage the Palestinian diaspora in places where Committee meetings were held.

31. **Ms. Flitti** (Observer for the League of Arab States) said that the hunger strike by Palestinian prisoners held in Israeli jails that had begun in April 2017 had lasted for more than a month and was

unfortunately still ongoing. In April the League of Arab States had sent a letter to the Secretary-General and the President of the International Committee of the Red Cross calling on them to urge Israel to comply with international law and the Fourth Geneva Convention.

32. The League of Arab States had convened an extraordinary meeting on 4 May 2017 and had adopted a resolution to conduct an inquiry into the condition of the Palestinian prisoners. The resolution called on the international community to exert pressure on Israel to treat the Palestinian prisoners as prisoners of war and called on States signatories to the Fourth Geneva Convention to carry out their responsibilities towards prisoners. On that same date, the League had also organized an event to show its solidarity with the Palestinian prisoners and had also created an operations room to report on developments concerning the hunger strike.

The meeting rose at 4.10 p.m.